

entirely unexpected.

On 20 January 1989 I saw two *A. javanicus* perched on top of a rain tree *Enterolobium saman* near my office on Zoo Road in the heart of Guwahati city. In fact, I observed the birds through my window. It was a rare sight, with four more species of mynas visible from the same window at the same time (1500 hrs). Some common and jungle mynas were also on the same tree. One bank myna *A. ginginianus* flew past the tree, while a few pied mynas *Sturnus contra* were seen just below the tree. Thereafter, perhaps the same pair was seen on some subsequent days also.

On 17 March 1989, I saw a pair feeding on the flowers of simul near the Forest Inspection Bungalow in the Burha-Chapori RF of Sonitpur district. Burha-Chapori is a *char* or sandy island/tract of the

Brahmaputra river. On the same tree in Burha-Chapori it was again seen on 18 March. On the same day a small flock was seen among bushes and thickets in Laokhowa Wildlife Sanctuary of Nagaon district. Laokhowa is adjacent to Burha-Chapori and in both the areas elephant grass with patches of woodlands form the main habitat type.

In Manipur it can be assumed to be a resident, but in the case of Assam, especially the Brahmaputra valley localities (Sibsagar, Guwahati and Burha-Chapori-Laokhowa), its status is still not satisfactorily known. All the sightings recorded by me were between January and March.

April 20, 1989 ANWARUDDIN CHOUDHURY

14. COMMON MYNA *ACRIDOTHERES TRISTIS* (LINN.) FISHING

On 28 June 1989 at 0600 hrs I sat in a hide overlooking a couple of pools in the Sigurhalla, a jungle stream that courses through the Sigur Reserve in the Nilgiris district in Tamil Nadu. This once perennial stream now remains dry most of the year. The shallow pool immediately below me was fast drying up. Carp fingerlings 2 to 6 cm long were struggling for survival. A common kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, observing me, departed. Along came a common myna *Acridotheres tristis* and, observing the surfacing fish, it waded into the shallows and picked up a 4 cm long live carp, flew with it to a strip of grass some 10 m away and proceeded to eat it. It did not swallow the fish whole, kingfisher-fashion, but tore off pieces and gulped them down. Another

common myna joined in and after each had killed and partially eaten three fishes, a quarrel ensued and put an end to the fishing. The following morning also seemingly the same two birds came and fished. But as the quarrel started soon after, they left abruptly. That evening one of the birds came and picked up a dead fish and ate some of it. Besides these two, other common mynas were observed in the area, but they did not take part in the fishing.

I have observed common mynas fishing in the Sigurhalla previously also. On each of these occasions the pursuit was not confined to an odd pair, but was in the nature of a general expedition.

August 8, 1989

E.R.C. DAVIDAR

15. YELLOWBROWED BULBUL *HYSIPETES INDICUS* (JERDON) IN THE EASTERN GHATS

On a field trip to Mamandur forests in the Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh (14 km from Renigunta) between 1 and 3 January 1988, I came across the yellowbrowed bulbul *Hypsipetes indicus*. We were on a trek towards Tunru-kona and were about 4-5 km from the Cudappah Road and in thick forest. The vegetation was particularly thick at the spot where I noticed the bird, perhaps as a result of the stream flowing close by. I am quite familiar with the double call notes of this species and this was how

I first registered its presence. I heard the calls at least 3-4 times. Later, I noticed a couple of birds in flight; the encounter was brief and sudden. As I had limited time at my disposal, I could not investigate further.

The HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1983) says that the yellowbrowed bulbul is distributed in the evergreen biotope in the Western Ghats south of Belgaum and Goa and in Sri Lanka. It is said to be most common above 900 m although occasionally seen near sea

level. There do not appear to be any reports of this species outside this range, particularly in the Eastern Ghats. In this context, it is quite interesting to find a (relict?) population of this species in an isolated pocket in the Eastern Ghats.

S.A. Hussain (pers. comm. 1989) also saw

yellowbrowed bulbuls in the Tirupati hills, thereby confirming my earlier sight record. I am grateful to him for encouraging me to write this note.

July 15, 1989

V. SANTHARAM

16. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR OF JUNGLE BABBLERS *TURDOIDES STRIATUS* (DUMONT) TOWARDS A SNAKE

At about 1500 hrs one afternoon during March 1989 we were awakened from our slumber by the agitated calls of jungle babblers *Turdoides striatus* at our residence in Malaparamba at Calicut. When we looked out through the window we saw four babblers attacking a small sized snake on the ground. When we came out for a closer look, the babblers flew away. The snake was unable to move properly and appeared to be in great distress; we ended its misery by killing it. When we examined it we found that most of the peck marks were in the head region and both the eyes were damaged. The snake was about 50 cm long and probably was a striped keelback

Amphiesma stolata. The babblers were regular visitors to our residence but we do not know whether they had a nest nearby, which was the reason for their aggressive behaviour. We presume that this type of behaviour has not been reported earlier for jungle babblers. However, Johnsingh *et al.* (*JBNHS* 79: 503-511) reported that a group of whiteheaded babblers *T. affinis* lost interest in a 2 m active snake after mobbing it for four minutes.

June 24, 1989

S. DEVASAHAYAM
ANITA DEVASAHAYAM

17. PROBABLE SIGHTING OF PLAINBACKED MOUNTAIN THRUSH *ZOOTHERA MOLLISSIMA* (BLYTH) IN BANDHAVGARH NATIONAL PARK, MADHYA PRADESH

Bandhavgarh National Park is located in Shahdol District of Madhya Pradesh (23°30' to 23°48' N and 80°46'45" to 81°11' 36" E). It lies within the drainage area of the Son river, a southern tributary of the Ganga.

On 8 February 1987, while walking along a hill-slope covered with thick bamboo *Dendrocalamus strictus* my attention was attracted by some movement in the bamboo, the source of which was a thrush sitting fairly low on some fallen bamboo. It was positioned sideways on to me and was in clear view. It was about the size of Tickell's thrush *Turdus unicolor*, olive brown above; flanks heavily barred; chin and throat speckled to almost side of the face. Short eyebrow, just a hint of a wing bar, though I could not be sure of this. Bill dark brown and legs of same colour. After a while it flew up to another branch with its back turned towards me, flicking its tail up and then slowly lowering it.

On consulting the HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF

INDIA AND PAKISTAN (Ali, S. and Ripley, S.D. 1968-74), the closest I could get to an identification was the plainbacked mountain thrush *Zoothera mollissima* or the longtailed mountain thrush *Zoothera dixonii*. They are mentioned in the text as being confusingly alike, with the most conspicuous distinguishing feature between them being the whitish wing-bars present in the latter, the former having pale-tipped wing-coverts considered inconspicuous. This bird did not have conspicuous wing-bars.

On 18 January 1988 I saw a similar bird, again on a hill-slope covered with mixed forest and bamboo. This time it was on the ground facing me and I could see the "crescentic spots" mentioned in the HANDBOOK on breast and belly, but no wing-bars.

On 18 November 1988, in company with Jack Poll, an experienced birdwatcher, and Dinesh Thapa, I saw this bird again at a place called Shesh Shayya where the vegetation is very moist and thick. It had